Rashi on Ruth
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Rashi on Ruth

Chapter 1

Verse 1

And it happened in the days when judges judged. [During the period] before King Shaul reigned, when the generations were administered by judges; 1 There was no individual judge who could exercise control over all of Yisroel, rather there were many judges. (Malbim) Alternatively, this was a period when God judged the judges. (Gra) and this occurred in the days of Ivtzan, as our sages said, "Ivtzan is Bo'az." 2 Maseches Bava Basra 91a; and Bo'az is a central figure in Megillas Rus.
And a man went. He was very wealthy, 3 אישׁ denotes an important person, as Targum renders, גברא רבא, "a great man." and the leader of the generation. He left Eretz Yisroel for regions out of the land because of stinginess, for he was miserly toward the poor who came to press him; 4 He was the only man to leave Eretz Yisroel because of the famine. Because of his stature and greatness he was severely punished for leaving Eretz Yisroel and remaining in Mo'av. (Malbim) therefore he was punished. 5 He was afraid that the poor would unite and confiscate all of his possessions. (Malbim)

Verse 2

Ephrathites. Important people, and similarly, "the son of Tochu, the son of Tzuph, an Ephrathite," 6 I Shmuel 1:1. [meaning] an aristocrat. Look how important they were, for Eglon the King of Mo'av married off his daughter to Machlon, as the Master said, "Rus was the daughter of Eglon." 7 Maseches Sanhedrin 105b. Another explanation of "Ephratites," [they were from Beis Lechem,] because Beis Lechem is called Ephros. 8 See Bereishis 48:7, "and I buried her [Rachel] on the way to Ephros which is Beis Lechem."

Verse 3

Naomi's husband. Why is this stated again? From here they derived, "A man does not die except for his wife [i.e., she feels the loss more than anyone]. 9 Maseches Sanhedrin 22b. ([Another interpretation:] And it states, "Naomi's husband," i.e., that because he was Naomi's husband and ruled over her 10 See Rashi in Bereishis 9:20. and she was subordinate to him, therefore the Divine Attribute of Justice struck him and not her.) 11 Because once he decided to leave, his wife and two sons were compelled to follow.

Verse 4

Verse 5

Both. What is the meaning of "also" גַּם? First they were struck by financial loss and their camels and their cattle died; afterwards they "also" died. 12 When God punishes man He first deprives him of his property, and if he does not repent, God smites him in person. Alternatively, "also" indicates that their death was punishment "also" for having remained outside of Eretz Yisroel.

Verse 6

Verse 7

She left the place. Why is this stated? It is already stated, "and she returned from the fields of Mo'av," 13 Above, verse 6. and from where could she return if not from the place where she had been? Rather the phrase tells us that the departure of a righteous person from a place is noticeable and makes an impression; its splendor departs, its glory departs, the praise of the city departs. And similarly, "And Yaakov left Be'er Sheva." 14 Bereishis 28:10.

Verse 8

Verse 9

Verse 10

Verse 11

Verse 12

For I am too old to have a husband. That I should marry him and bear sons, that you would marry them, for they would not be forbidden to you [to marry] and you would not be forbidden to them as far as [the prohibition against marrying] the wife of an older brother who died before he was born, for she [the widow] does require a levirate marriage because Machlon and Chilyon were not [halachically] married to them because they were gentiles and had not converted, 15 Had they converted before, their marriage would be binding and Rus would be prohibited from marrying Machlon's yet unborn brother. The law of levirate marriage does not apply to a person born after his brother's death. Marrying one's brother's wife constitutes incest when levirate marriage does not apply. However, since there was no binding marriage, Rus would be permitted to marry Machlon's yet unborn brother. and now they were coming to convert as it is stated, "We will return with you to your people." 16 Above, verse 10. From now on we will become one people.
Even if I could say, "I have yet hope. " For even if my heart told me that I have hope to marry again and to bear sons.

Even if I were to have a husband tonight. And more than this, even if I were to conceive male offspring tonight.
And even if I were to bear sons. Or even if I had already borne sons.

Verse 13

Would you wait for them. This is a question posed in wonder, "Would you perhaps wait for them until they grew up?" 17 The feminine form of them [להן] is used, because Naomi was hinting that perhaps she would bear daughters instead of sons, so why wait for "them"? This תְּשַׂבֵּרְנָה is an expression similar to, "whose hope שִׂבְרוֹ is in Adonoy his God." 18 Tehillim 146:5. Also, see Megillas Esther 9:1.
Would you shut yourselves in. An expression of עוּג, being bound and imprisoned, as in, "He made a [confining] circle and stood within it." 19 Maseches Ta'anis 19a. Others interpret it as an expression of עִגּוּן, anchoring [i.e., being unable to marry], but that cannot be, for if so the nun should have been punctuated with a dagesh or it should have been spelled with two nuns. 20 See Maseches Bava Basra 73a and Rashi's commentary there.
For against me is directed the hand of Adonoy. Rabbi Leivi said, "Wherever it mentions "the hand of Adonoy," it refers to a plague of pestilence, and the classic example is, "Behold the hand of Adonoy is directed [at your livestock... a very heavy pestilence]." 21 Shemos 9:3.

Verse 14

Verse 15

See, your sister-in-law has gone back. In this [word], the accent is at the beginning [on the first syllable] under the shin, because it is in the past tense. [But,] "and in the morning she would return," 22 Megillas Esther 2:14. the accent is at the end [on the last syllable], on the bais, because it is in the present tense, and so it is in all similar cases. 23 See Rashi in Bereishis 29:6.

Verse 16

Do not urge me. Do not press me.
For wherever you go, I shall go. From here our Rabbis of blessed memory derived 24 In Maseches Yevamos 47b. that if a [prospective] proselyte comes to convert, we inform him of some of the punishments [for violating the commandments] so that is he decides to renege [from his intention to convert], he can renege; for out of the words of Rus, you can learn what Naomi said to her. [Naomi said.] "We may not venture outside the boundary [of 2000 cubits beyond city limits] on Shabbos." She [Rus] replied to her, "For wherever you go I shall go." 25 Alternatively, just as you are going to Eretz Yisroel for the sake of your religion, so it is my purpose to go there in order to be able to keep the Torah's commandments. (Malbim) [Naomi then said,] "We are prohibited to allow a woman to be secluded with a man who is not her husband." She [Rus] replied, "Where you lodge, I will lodge." [Naomi said,] "Our nation is separated from other nations by 613 commandments," [and Rus replied,] "Your people are my people." [Naomi said,] "Idolatry is forbidden to us," 26 Although idolatry is forbidden to Noahites, they are forbidden to worship idols only if they do so exclusively, but not if they worship God in conjunction with their idolatry. (Torah Temimah) [to which Rus replied,] "Your God is my God." [Naomi then said,] "Four [types of] death penalties were delegated to Beis Din [to punish transgressors]," [and Rus replied,]

“Where you die, I will die.” [Naomi continued,] “Two burial plots were delegated to Beis Din [to bury those executed], one for those stoned and those burned, and one for those decapitated and those strangled.” She [Rus] replied, “And there I shall be buried.”

Verse 17

So may Adonoy do to me. As He has begun to afflict [me], for His hand has gone forth against me to kill my husband and to cause me to lose my possessions.
And even more. If anything but death separates me from you.

Verse 18

She refrained from further discussion with her. From here they derived, “we neither overburden him [a prospective convert], nor are we meticulous with him.” 27 Maseches Yevamos 47b; i.e., we neither persuade nor dissuade him too much.

Verse 19

So the two of them went on. Rabbi Abahu said, “Come and see how dear the proselytes are before the Holy One, Blessed Is He. As soon as she decided to convert, Scripture compared her to Naomi [by stating, “the two of them...”]. 28 Despite leaving her home and family, Rus’ determination was so strong that Scripture ranks her equally with Naomi.
The whole city was astir. The whole city became astir. They had all gathered to bury the wife of Bo’az, who had died that very day. 29 Apparently the people of the city were gathered together because “the whole city” learned so quickly of their return. Rashi therefore explains why they had gathered.
Is this [really] Naomi. The hai is vowelized with a chataf because it is in the interrogative. Is this Naomi who was accustomed to travel in covered wagons and with the mules? 30 Because of the affliction and the hunger that she endured, Naomi’s appearance changed so drastically that they were hardly able to recognize her. Have you seen what has befallen her because she went abroad [i.e., outside Eretz Yisroel]?

Verse 20

Verse 21

I had gone forth full. With wealth and sons. Another interpretation [of “full”] is that she was pregnant.
Has testified against me. Has testified against me that I had sinned before Him. Another explanation is that the Divine Attribute of Justice has humbled me, as in, “And the pride of Yisroel shall be עָנָה humbled.” 31 Hoshe’a 5:5.

Verse 22

At the start of the barley harvest. The verse speaks about the harvest of the Omer. 32 The barley for the omer was harvested on the second night of Pesach and offered on the following day.

Chapter 2

Verse 1

A kinsman. A relative; he was the son of Elimelech's brother. Our Rabbis of blessed memory said, "Elimelech, and Salmone 1 Rus 4:21. the father of Bo'az, and the anonymous kinsman, 2 Ibid. 4:1. and the father of Naomi, 3 Therefore Bo'az and Naomi were cousins. were all sons of Nachshon, 4 Shemos 6:23 and Bamidbar 10:14. the son of Aminadav. 5 Maseches Bava Basra 91a. Yet the merit of their fathers was no avail them when they left the Land [of Yisroel] to go abroad."

Verse 2

Let me go now to the field. To one of the fields of the people of the city, after one of them, "in whose eyes I will find favor," so that he will not rebuke me.
And glean among the stalks, behind one in whose eyes I will find favor. After someone in whose eyes I will find favor. 6 Alternatively, after I find favor in his eyes, i.e., I will not glean in a field until I know the owner allows it. (Malbim)

Verse 3

So she went, and came and gleaned in the field. We find in Midrash Rus [the question is raised], "Before she had even gone she returned?" For it states, "and [she] came" and afterwards "and gleaned" [i.e., she came back before she gleaned]? Rather, [the Midrash explains] she would mark the roads before she entered the field, and she went and came and returned to the city, in order to make signs and markings so that she would not stray in the paths and she should know how to return. 7 Alternatively, Rabbi Eliezer said that she kept on coming back until she found decent people with whom to go. (Maseches Shabbos 113b).
[And as Divine fate decreed] she happened. To come to the portion of the field belonging to Bo'az.

Verse 4

Verse 5

To whom does this maiden belong. Was it the practice of Bo'az to inquire about women? Rather, [because] he saw her modest and wise behavior [he was curious about her. He observed that] two ears she would glean but three she would not glean; 8 As prescribed by the Mishnah (Pe'ah 6:5). The Torah in Vayikra 19:9 awards the fallen ears of grain and forgotten sheaves to the poor. Thus her exemplary behavior and her knowledge of the law caught the attention of Bo'az and he therefore inquired about her. and she would glean the standing ears while standing and the lying ones while sitting, in order to avoid bending over. 9 Maseches Shabbos 113b.

Verse 6

Who returned with Naomi. The accent is at the beginning, under the shin, because it is the past tense, and not the present tense [of the verb]. 10 See Rashi in Bereishis 29:6.

Verse 7

And she did say. To herself.

Please allow me to glean. The gleaning of the ears.
And gather among the sheaves. The forgotten sheaves. 11 Devarim 24:19.

Verse 8

Verse 9

And when you are thirsty, go to the jugs. And if you are thirsty, do not be ashamed to go and drink from the vessels of water that the young men will draw.

Verse 10

Verse 11

Verse 12

Verse 13

I cannot even be considered as one of your handmaidens. I am not as worthy as one of your handmaidens.

Verse 14

And dip your bread in the vinegar. From here [we derive] that vinegar is good for the heat. 12 Maseches Shabbos 113b. It is a popular and refreshing drink for those who toil in extremely hot climates.
And he handed her some roasted grain. And he extended to her. There is no similar [word] in Scripture, but only in the language of the Mishnah, "the outside, the inside and the handle [= 13 ".בֵּית הַאֲבִיטָה Maseches Chagigah 3:1.

Verse 15

Verse 16

And let [some sheaves] fall for her. שׁלׁ תָּשׁלוּ =] you should forget; pretend as though you are forgetting. 14 The double verb indicates that the action was to be repeated many times. The Targum for שְׁגָגָה [=oversight], is 15 ,שְׁלוּתָא Bamidbar 15:25. and similarly, "because of this error." 16 II Shmuel 6:7. Another explanation [of שׁלׁ תָּשׁלוּ is "let fall"], an expression [as in,] "your olive tree will cast off [= יְשַׁל [its fruit]." 17 Devarim 28:40.
Bundles. Small sheaves, and there is a similar expression in the language of the Mishnah, "[If] he found them [tefillin] tied up in bundles or in packets." 18 Maseches Eruvin 10:1.

Verse 17

Verse 18

Verse 19

Blessed be he that took note of you. [I.e.,] the owner of the field who showed you favor [and allowed you] to glean in his field. 19 Alternatively, the person who takes note of you and marries you will be blessed because you are a gifted person. (Gra).

Verse 20

With the living and with the deceased. That he feeds and sustains the living, and occupies himself with the needs of the deceased. 20 The "needs of the deceased" refers to the kindness displayed by Bo'az to Elimelech and his sons. (Ibn Ezra) Alternatively, the "needs of the deceased" refers to the willingness of Bo'az to perform a levirate marriage and will thus do kindness to the memory of her deceased husband. (Alshich)

Chapter 3

Verse 1

Verse 2

Our kinsman. Our relative.
Behold, he will be winnowing. The chaff, vraner in O.F.
Tonight. Because the generation was unrestrained in theft and robbery; he would sleep in his granary to guard his granary.

Verse 3

[And you shall] bathe. From the contamination of your [past] idolatry. 1 Rus, obviously does not have to be told to do such a basic thing (i.e., to bathe), therefore it must allude for her to remove the contamination of her past idolatry.
And scent yourself. These are the [Torah's] precepts.
Dress [yourself] in your finest garb. Shabbos garments. 2 Maseches Shabbos 113b. The word שמלה rather than בגד or לבוש indicates especially fine clothing of Shabbos or Yom Tov. Malbim Alternatively, the mere mention to put on clothes is superfluous, it therefore must refer to Shabbos clothing. (Sifsei Chachomim)
And go down to the threshing floor. It is written וְיָרַדְתִּי [=and I will go down]; [i.e.,] my merit will go down with you. 3 And protect you from any mishap.
But do not identify yourself to the man. To Bo'az.

Verse 4

Verse 5

Verse 6

So she went down to the threshing floor and she did. She [Naomi] said to her, "Bathe and scent yourself, dress yourself in the finest garb," and afterwards, "and go down to the threshing floor." But she [Rus] did not do so, but [instead] she said, "If I go down when I am dressed up, whoever meets me or sees me will think that I am a harlot." She therefore first went down to the threshing floor and afterwards adorned herself, as her mother-in-law had instructed. 4 Maseches Shabbos 113b.

Verse 7

And his heart was jubilant. Because he engaged in Torah [study]. 5 Alternatively, he was happy that his prayers were accepted and the famine ended. (Targum)
And she came in softly. בַּלָּט =] silently. 6 Alternatively, slowly. (Radak)

Verse 8

The man was startled. He thought it was a demon and wanted to scream, but she held him and encompassed him with her arms.
And [he] turned about. וַיִּלָּפֵת =] and he was seized, as in, "And Shimshon grasped 7 ".וַיִּלְפֹּת Shoftim 16:29. Alternatively, "his skin Hardened [like a turnip= לפת] from fright." (Maseches Sanhedrin 19b)
And behold there was a woman. He placed his hand on her head and recognized that it was a woman [and not a demon]. 8 Because demons have no hair. Alternatively, he realized from her voice that she was a woman, or he saw her by the light of the moon.

Verse 9

Spread your mantle. The corner of your garment to cover me with your cloak; and this is an expression of marriage. 9 An expression taken from birds who spread their wings [כנף] when they mate. (Malbim)
For you are a near kinsman. To redeem my husband's inheritance, as it is stated, "and a close relative comes and redeems, etc." 10 Vayikra 25:25. And my mother-in-law and I must sell our inheritance, and now it is incumbent upon you to buy it. Acquire [i.e., marry] me also, along with it, 11 The Torah requires only that he redeem the relative's property, but it does not require that he redeem his relative's wife. She therefore asked him to marry her. so that the name of the deceased be remembered upon his estate, so that when I come to the field they will say, "this is Machlon's wife."

Verse 10

[Your] earlier [kindness]. That you did for your mother-in-law. 12 When you abandoned your home and fortune to stay with your mother-in-law. Your last act of kindness, i.e., your willingness to marry an older man to perpetuate your late husband's name is a greater sacrifice on your part.

Verse 11

Verse 12

Now, though it is true that. אִם [=if] is written but not read, i.e., it conveys uncertainty [who will be the actual redeemer], for there is surely a redeemer closer than I. 13 The kinsman was Elimelech's brother whereas Bo'az was only his nephew. (Another version: "כִּי אִם" conveys doubt, but it is certain [that he was a definite redeemer]). 14 I.e., without the word אם to indicate that there was actually no uncertainty, i.e., that Bo'az knew that he would indeed be the one to redeem her. Rabbi Yehoshua the son of Leivi said, "Salmone, Elimelech, and Tov were brothers. Then what is the meaning [of the statement by Bo'az], "which belonged to our brother, to Elimelech"? A person always refers to his uncle as his brother, as the matter is stated, "And Avrom heard that his brother was captured." 15 Bereishis 14:14. Now was not Avrohom his [Lot's] uncle? 16 Lot's father Haran, was Avrohom's brother; see Bereishis 11:27. So was Bo'az, Elimelech's nephew, a relative of Machlon, but Tov was more closely related.
Even closer than I. For he [Tov] is a brother, and I am a brother's son [i.e., nephew]. 17 And therefore he has priority.

Verse 13

Stay the night. Stay over [one more night] without a husband.
As Adonoy lives. She said to him, "You are dismissing me with words [i.e., excuses]." He jumped up and swore to her 18 חַי ה' is the Biblical form of an oath, as in I Shmuel 19:6. that he would not dismiss her with words. Some of our Rabbis said that he swore to his evil inclination, for his evil inclination was inciting him [by saying], "You are not married and she is not married; be intimate with her." So he swore that he would not be intimate with her except with marriage.

Verse 14

For he said, "It must not be known. " This refers back to "and she arose before one could recognize [another]." He hurried her to rise because he said in his heart, "It does not befit my honor that it should be known that the woman came to the threshing floor." 19 According to the Alshich, Bo'az was concerned with Rus' reputation rather than his own, because his righteousness was well known and nobody would suspect him of acting immorally.

Verse 15

Six measures of barley. It is impossible to say [that it means] six se'ah, because it is not customary for a woman to carry such a [large] load; rather, [it means] literally, six barleycorns; and he hinted to her that there was destined to emerge from her a son who would be blessed with six blessings: "the spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and fear of Adonoy." 20 Yeshaya 11:2. Alternatively, this is the equivalent of a kav which is one sixth of a se'ah, also referred to as a שׁשׁ and mentioned in Yechezkel 45:13. The Mishnah in Maseches Pe'ah (8:7) states that a poor person who is traveling from place to place must be given not less than a half kav of wheat from which to make bread. Bo'az therefore gave Naomi a whole kav, one half for Rus and the other half for herself. (Malbim) The six barleycorns may allude to the six righteous men, each blessed with six virtues are destined to descend from this marriage: Dovid, Daniel, Chananya, Mishaeil, Azaryah and Moshiach. (Targum)

Verse 16

Verse 17

Verse 18

Until he settles. [I.e., until] the man [settles] the matter today.

Chapter 4

Verse 1

So-and-so. But his name was not written because he did not wish to redeem. 1 The person's name was Tov (See above 3:13). His name is omitted because he did not discharge his duty as a kinsman. He therefore did not merit to be recorded as Tov [=good].
So-and-so. פְּלֹנִי אַלְמֹנִי is rendered [into Aramaic] in the Prophets as, "concealed and secret."
So. פְּלֹנִי means] covered and concealed, [as in] the expression of, "If there be concealed 2 "יִפָּלֵא Devarim 17:8. and "Is there anything concealed הֲיִפָּלֵא from Adonoy?" 3 Bereishis 18:14.
And so. אַלְמֹנִי means widowed, without a name. (Another version: [He is called] אַלְמֹנִי because he was widowed of the words of the Torah, for he should have expounded, "[only] an Ammonite [is forbidden in marriage to a Jewish woman], but not an Ammonitess [i.e., an Ammonite woman is not forbidden in marriage to a Jewish man]; a Mo'avite, but not a Mo'aviteess." Yet he said, "for I would mar my own inheritance.")

Verse 2

Verse 3

Verse 4

That I may know [now], for beside you there is no one. [Who is as] close [as you] to redeem.

Verse 5

And from Rus the Mo'avitess. You must buy [the inheritance], and she is not willing [to sell] unless you marry her.

Verse 6

For I would mar my own inheritance. נַחֲלָתִי =] my offspring, as in, "the inheritance of Adonoy is children;" 4 Tehillim 127:3. to give my offspring a stigma, for it is stated, "Neither an Ammonite nor a Mo'avite may enter [into Adonoy's community]," 5 Devarim 23:4. but he erred [by not interpreting it as] "an Ammonite but not an Ammonitess." 6 He was not aware that the Torah prohibited only the male Mo'avites from entering the ranks of Bnei Yisroel, but the females were permitted. Alternatively, he knew that females were permitted to enter the ranks of Bnei Yisroel, but

he feared that in future generations the ruling may be challenged, as it was in Dovid’s time by Do’eg.

Verse 7

Concerning redemption. This is a sale.
And exchange. This is an exchange.
A man would take off his shoe. This is an act of acquisition, just as we acquire title with a scarf in lieu of a shoe. And our Rabbis of blessed memory differed on this matter, 7 Maseches Bava Metzia 47a. as to who gave [the shoe] to whom. Some say that one acquires title with the utensil of the acquirer, and Bo’az gave [his shoe] to the redeemer, and some say that one acquires title with the utensil of the seller, and the redeemer gave [his shoe] to Bo’az.
This was the form of validation in Yisroel. תְּעוּדָה =] the law of testimony.

Verse 8

Verse 9

Verse 10

To perpetuate the name of the deceased upon his inheritance: Since his wife goes and comes on the estate and brings in and takes out [items], people say, “This is Machlon’s wife,” and thereby his name is remembered upon it.

Verse 11

Like Rachel and like Leah. Even though they were from the tribe of Yehudah and of the descendants of Leah, they conceded that Rachel was the mainstay of the household and they mentioned Rachel before Leah. 8 Alternatively, the blessing was for (Naomi)[Ruth] who was the daughter of idolaters. They blessed her that she should be in her own righteousness like Rachel and Leah who also were daughters of an idolater [Lavan], but because of their marriage to a great and righteous man [Yaakov], they created the House of Yisroel.
And be famous. I.e., may your name become great.

Verse 12

Like the house of Peretz. From whom they were descended. 9 Otherwise they should have blessed Bo’az to be like Ephrayim and Menashe.

Verse 13

Verse 14

Verse 15

Verse 16

Verse 17

Verse 18

These are the generations of Peretz. Since [Scripture] traced Dovid’s lineage to the name of Rus the Mo’avitess, it returned and traced his lineage to Yehudah’s name. 10 The symbol of royalty.